



Besh Cup 1-2 recap

The Alaska Winter Stars just wrapped up a successful weekend of racing up in Fairbanks for Besh Cups #1 and #2. Despite training only on the short and icy snow-making loop in Anchorage for several weeks, our skiers proved to be well prepared for these important early-season races. Due to lack of snow in Anchorage, the first Besh Cup weekend's races were moved to Birch Hill in Fairbanks at the last minute. Though logistically challenging, most of us found our way up north ready to race fast.

The first race was a classic sprint. Normally we don't sprint in Fairbanks, so this was a new experience for most of us. With a qualifier and heats, the long sprint day lasted longer than the short daylight hours with heats running well past the 2:45pm sunset. The Winter Stars had many podiums and top-10 finishes in the unusually warm-weathered (20s) sprint, despite having little practice with classic tracks this season. AWS captured titles in U12 boys, U12 girls, U16 girls, and U18 girls. Molly Gellert showed to be one of the fastest ladies in Alaska with her first place in U18 and third place overall with the seniors. Gus Schumacher showed to be improving his sprint skills racing in the A-final against some of the best senior sprinters in the country with a 2nd for U18 boys and 5th overall. Eli Hermanson also fought hard in the heats with a 5th for U18 boys and 21st overall. Quincy Donley headlined the U16 ladies with her first place in U16 and 16th overall with U18+. Maya Brubaker also turned heads with her 6th place for U16. Zander Mauer was the team's top U16 boy with a 9th place. The U14 races had several top-10's for AWS with Alison Ulrich finishing 4th, Meredith Schwartz 7th, and Berit Meyers 10th for the ladies and Isaac Hermanson 5th and Aaron Power 6th for the boys. One of the most exciting races of the day was for U12. Murphy Kimball and Ronen Woods went first and second respectively in a photo finish and Heidi Schumacher skied away from the field for first with Quincee Elberg capturing third. The next day was skate distance races on the hilly Birch Hill courses. AWS had another standout day capturing three titles and several more podiums. The most impressive performance was by Gus Schumacher in the men's 15k, who broke away from multiple elite seniors with national champion David Norris. Though they put 45 seconds into world cup skier and AWS alumni Eric Packer, Gus ultimately was outsprinted by Norris, finishing 2nd overall and first for U18. We look forward to their rematch at US Nationals! Also posting a strong performance for U18 boys was Eli Hermanson racing to 4th U18 and 14th overall. For the women, Molly Gellert challenged the top senior women in the 10k having a similar dual with Becca Rorabaugh after Rosie Frankowski skied away from the field. Molly ultimately finished an impressive third overall and first for U18 ladies. Caitlin Gohr also had a strong race finishing 8th for U18 and 22nd overall. In the U16 5k race, Quincy Donley secured 2nd, Tatum Witter 7th, and Maya Brubaker 9th for ladies and Zander Mauer improved on Saturday with a 4th place for 5k boys. Our U14 girls packed the top ten and double podiumed with Meredith Schwartz placing an impressive 2nd, Alison Ulrich 3rd, Tarja Latva-Kiskola 7th, and Meredith Duhrsen 8th. Isaac Hermanson placed 8th and Aaron Power 9th for boys U14. Finally, the U12 skiers had another impressive day with Murphy Kimball taking his second win in two days and Ronen Woods capturing third. Heidi Schumacher landed another podium for third in the ladies' race.

Looking forward, many AWS skiers are in the running for Junior Nationals and Arctic Winter Games spots. It will be very important to train hard and smart the next four weeks so that we can continue our strong season. Well done to all racers and see you at practice!

